

U.S. Department of Education
2011 - Blue Ribbon Schools Program
A Public School

School Type (Public Schools): ☐ Charter ☐ Title 1 ☐ Magnet ☐ Choice
(Check all that apply, if any)

Name of Principal: Mrs. Susan Kaplan

Official School Name: Helen Keller Middle School

School Mailing Address: 360 Sport Hill Road
Easton, CT 06612-1651

County: Fairfield County State School Code Number: 0465111

Telephone: (203) 261-3607 E-mail: skaplan@eastonps.org
Fax: (203) 452-8403 Web URL: www.helenkellerps.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*: Dr. Bernard Josefsberg Ed.D. Superintendent e-mail: bjosefsberg@er9.org

District Name: Easton School District District Phone: (203) 261-2513

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Dr. Daniel Underberger

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager (aba.kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2010-2011 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2005.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 or 2010.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district: 1 Elementary schools
(per district designation) 1 Middle/Junior high schools
0 High schools
0 K-12 schools
2 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 14674

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Small city or town in a rural area
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2010 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total			# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0		6	81	60	141
K	0	0	0		7	60	59	119
1	0	0	0		8	70	66	136
2	0	0	0		9	0	0	0
3	0	0	0		10	0	0	0
4	0	0	0		11	0	0	0
5	0	0	0		12	0	0	0
Total in Applying School:								396

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
3 % Asian
1 % Black or African American
4 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
87 % White
5 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2009-2010 school year: 2%

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred to the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	4
(2)	Number of students who transferred from the school after October 1, 2009 until the end of the school year.	3
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	7
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2009	384
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.02
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	2

8. Percent limited English proficient students in the school: 0%

Total number of limited English proficient students in the school: 0

Number of languages represented, not including English: 0

Specify languages:

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1%
 Total number of students who qualify: 4

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 9%
 Total number of students served: 36

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>3</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>9</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>22</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>14</u>	<u>1</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>
Support staff	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>
Total number	<u>55</u>	<u>3</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1: 20:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only high schools need to supply graduation rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any student or teacher attendance rates under 95% and teacher turnover rates over 12% and fluctuations in graduation rates.

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Teacher turnover rate	8%	11%	6%	6%	6%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

If these data are not available, explain and provide reasonable estimates.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools): Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2010 are doing as of Fall 2010.

Graduating class size:	<u>0</u>
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>0%</u>
Enrolled in a community college	<u>0%</u>
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0%</u>
Found employment	<u>0%</u>
Military service	<u>0%</u>
Other	<u>0%</u>
Total	<u>0%</u>

Helen Keller Middle School is one of five schools that comprise the Easton-Redding-Region 9 school community. The mission of the Easton-Redding-Region 9 school community, an educational partnership of families, staff and two towns striving for excellence, is to nurture and inspire all students to realize their potential and to become self-sustaining, contributing members of a diverse, continuously changing society. This mission is accomplished by providing a challenging, dynamic and enriching education that cultivates the unique talents of each student and fosters personal integrity, intellectual curiosity, individual wellbeing and civic responsibility.

Helen Keller Middle School has a proud tradition of excellence in both academic and extra-curricular activities. There are currently 396 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students enrolled at Helen Keller Middle School. It is set in a rural town in Southwestern Connecticut with a population of approximately 7,500 residents. This reputation is based on strong academic achievement, a dedicated and well-trained staff, and a high level of parent and community support and involvement.

Helen Keller Middle School was named after the deaf and blind activist, Helen Keller, who died in 1968 at the age of 87 in her Easton, Connecticut home, where she chose to spend her final days. The staff at Helen Keller Middle School invokes the spirit and personal characteristics of this remarkable woman in teaching students about perseverance and the importance of hard work in the face of adversities. For example, at the beginning of each school year, Mrs. Parker, the principal, challenged the entire study body to live up to the attributes of our namesake. Consequently, a genuine commitment to academic excellence and an equally strong emphasis on character development and good citizenship permeate the culture of Helen Keller Middle School.

The Blue Ribbon nomination is testimony to the school wide focus on helping each child reach his/her full academic potential. Every staff member monitors the academic progress of each child closely, differentiates instruction as needed, and maintains close contact with parents/guardians via classroom and grade level newsletters as well as phone calls and meetings. This commitment to each child is especially evident at the grade level team meetings and Child Study Team meetings; classroom teachers and support staff review instructional strategies that have been effective with students, and they challenge themselves to develop alternative ways to address the needs of children who are struggling. A visitor to one of these meetings would hear staff members ask, "What else can we do to help this child?"

However, the academic achievement of our students is only part of the Helen Keller Middle School success story. This is a vibrant community where students take ownership of many events that have become important traditions in the community that encourage boys and girls to be productive citizens. Every year, the students organize the December Toy Drive for an inner city elementary school in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The entire student body donates and wraps hundreds of toys; our students eagerly tally the number of toys that are donated and then, fifty 8th graders are chosen to travel to an elementary school in Bridgeport to meet with the children and distribute the toys. Students consider it a privilege to be selected to be part of the group that hands out the toys to the children in Bridgeport. Our 6th, 7th and 8th graders participate in many other activities that demonstrate good citizenship, such as the Food Drive for the needy families in surrounding communities, Gang Green (an environmental club), and the annual Pancake Breakfast for the entire Easton, Connecticut community. At this sold out annual event, the students decorate the cafetorium, cook in the school kitchen, and serve the pancakes to our hungry guests on a Saturday morning in November.

These student centered traditions and the academic achievement of our students make Helen Keller Middle School unique, and they are the foundation for the genuine esprit de corps that permeates the building. Mrs. Joan Parker served as principal of Helen Keller Middle School for six years, and she was the guiding force behind these twin goals of academic excellence and student activism. She was proud of her school and frequently began staff meetings with a big smile and a heartfelt cheer-"This is the best middle school in the world!" Mrs. Parker believed that her school deserved a Blue Ribbon nomination. Sadly, Mrs. Parker passed away this past November before the Blue Ribbon nominations were announced, so she did not know that her beloved school had, indeed, been recognized as an exemplary school. But, every day her spirit lives on here at Helen Keller Middle School as the children, their families and the staff continue to learn and work together.

1. Assessment Results:

Students in Connecticut sit for the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) during the month of March. Students take approximately seven hours of exams in the areas of mathematics, science, reading, and writing. The mathematics test assesses students' mastery of grade appropriate mathematics skills and concepts along with their ability to solve realistic problems. The overall reading score is based on a combination of scores from two reading tests, the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) and Reading Comprehension. Each test accounts for fifty percent of the total reading scale score. The DRP test assesses students' ability to understand what has been read. A DRP unit score is reported which is a norm-referenced score. This is the only portion of the CMT that can yield national percentile rank information. The Reading Comprehension test assesses students' ability to read and understand both fiction and nonfiction passages.

For each content area tested by the Connecticut Mastery Test there are five performance levels:

Level 5 Advanced

Mathematics: Generally, students who perform at this level demonstrate exceptional knowledge of grade-level content.

Reading: Students who perform at this level are likely to demonstrate an exceptional ability to read and respond to grade-appropriate literary, informational and reading-to-perform-a-task texts without assistance.

Level 4 Goal

Mathematics: Generally, students who perform at this level demonstrate extensive knowledge of grade-level content.

Reading: Students who perform at this level are likely to demonstrate a consistent ability to read and respond to grade-appropriate literary, informational and reading-to-perform-a-task texts with minimal assistance.

Level 3 Proficient

Mathematics: Generally, students who perform at this level demonstrate adequate knowledge of grade-level content.

Reading: Students who perform at this level are likely to demonstrate an adequate ability to read and respond to grade-appropriate literary, informational and reading-to-perform-a-task texts with some assistance.

Level 2 Basic

Mathematics: Generally, students who perform at this level demonstrate partially developed knowledge of grade-level content.

Reading: Students who perform at this level are likely to demonstrate a limited ability to read and respond to grade-appropriate literary, informational and reading-to-perform-a-task texts, and require assistance to complete many reading tasks.

Level 1 Below Basic

Mathematics: Generally, students who perform at this level demonstrate limited knowledge of grade-level content.

Reading: Students who perform at this level are likely to demonstrate a very limited ability to read and respond to grade-appropriate literary, informational and reading-to-perform-a-task texts, and require significant assistance to complete most reading tasks.

To view our specific performance results please follow this link to find our NCLB Report Card:

http://ctayp.emetric.net/ReportCards/2010/100461051_2010.PDF

The accomplishment of the students at Helen Keller Middle School is evidence of the work of our dedicated faculty and staff, along with the faculty and staff of Samuel Staples Elementary School. We are very well aware that the formal education of our middle school students is one point along the continuum that began the day that each student entered the doors of the elementary school. We also realize that credit for our students' success is also shared with the families of Easton who support their children and our school system each and every day; and most obviously, with our hard working students themselves.

In addition to the people that make up our community and school, other factors that have provided positive influence on the teaching and learning that occurs at Helen Keller Middle School include, but are not limited to improvements made by targeted efforts during the past three years. The structure and schedule of Helen Keller Middle School was changed two years ago to maintain a small class size (19-21) and lessen the pupil load of each teacher. Through our membership in the Tristate Consortium, multiple teachers were trained in the Tristate model of school improvement. The Tri-State Consortium is a learning organization devoted to assisting its member public school districts in using student performance data to develop a rigorous framework for systemic planning, assessment, accreditation, and continuous improvement. As "critical friends", the Tristate Consortium has helped us advance teaching and learning and share best practices through the application of the Tri-State assessment model. Most recently our district was assessed in the area of science.

2. Using Assessment Results:

The outstanding performance by students of Helen Keller Middle School has been achieved by the hard work of students and a very dedicated staff of teachers. Many teachers return to our school before their summer break is over to pour over and analyze student standardized assessment results. Our teachers demonstrate their desire to make each year a year of significant growth for every student under their care. Every staff member at our school focuses on continuous improvement for themselves as well as the students. The mission of our school and the culture indicates that each person sets high expectations for themselves. We have a reflective professional culture at Helen Keller Middle School. Formally, teachers plan lessons that demonstrate fidelity to our state standards and local curriculum. After formal observations, teachers present a written lesson reflection to their evaluator, which includes commentary on not only what happened during that particular lesson, but also what could be done next time to improve the lesson. That, however, is only the beginning. Our Tri-District has a well developed assessment plan that the staff at Helen Keller Middle School follow closely. It entails baseline assessments at the beginning of each school year, followed by multiple measurements throughout the school year to monitor student progress. Teachers determine individual students' areas of weakness and personalize instruction for each student. Our school monitors the growth of students who receive additional support outside of their classroom through an online data management system called RTImDirect. With the use of this program, teachers deliver Tier II Scientifically Research Based Interventions (SRBI) in accordance with the Connecticut State Department of Education

guidelines. Assessments available through AIMSWeb enable teachers to provide targeted SRBI support to students. Teachers also assess and monitor student progress through two online programs, the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) and the Writing Assessment Program (WrAP). NWEA is a adaptive assessment that we use in the areas of science, mathematics, and reading. Teachers use the results of the NWEA assessment to guide them in delivering differentiated instruction to their students.

3. Communicating Assessment Results:

Many modes of communication are used by staff members of Helen Keller Middle School to communicate assessment results to parents, students, and the community. State Assessment results are mailed to parents annually with a summary of trends from the assessment. Principal coffees are offered early in the year to answer specific questions parents may have regarding the Connecticut Mastery Test results. The October Board of Education Meeting is dedicated to reviewing the results of the Connecticut Mastery Test and discussing areas of focus to improve results. Students receive assessment results throughout the school year on a regular basis from their individual teachers. For example, during the past several years, Helen Keller Middle School has used Northwest Evaluation Association computer-based testing in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science. This computerized adaptive assessment allows teachers to identify students' strengths and needs. Teachers share results of these tests with parents and students. Another important assessment tool that we have used is The Writing Assessment Program (WrAP). WrAP is a web-based assessment tool that is scored analytically, providing a direct measure using a six-trait, six-point rubric to provide data that can help guide writing instruction. Students at Helen Keller Middle School submit writing samples on-line and receive instant feedback that helps them improve their writing. Staff members have noted that students are highly motivated to surpass their previous score on this writing program. This past year, a new data management system, PowerSchool, was implemented at Helen Keller Middle School. We are currently preparing to open a parent portal whereby parents may access their child's grades on-line. This will allow parent access to student performance on assessments given throughout the school year.

The staff at Helen Keller Middle School understands the importance of effectively communicating assessment results to parents, students, and community members. We as a staff continually evaluate our communication with the goal of continuously improving our communication.

4. Sharing Lessons Learned:

The teachers and staff of Helen Keller Middle school value professional collaboration. This is evident in the configuration of our teaching teams as well as the membership in multiple professional organizations. Teachers here at Helen Keller Middle School have common planning time to create lessons and assessments. Content area teams meet regularly to review assessment data and analyze student work. The importance of working together in a supportive environment is apparent through our new teacher mentor program entitled, Teacher Evaluation and Mentoring (TEAM) Program. Veteran teachers serve as mentors for all new educators. They present workshops and meet one-on-one to help navigate the choppy waters of the early teaching years. Since our school is part of a tri-district, the time to work with colleagues from the other schools and towns is valuable. District-wide curriculum committees meet throughout the year to improve instruction and coordinate common experiences for all students.

Beyond the confines our district, teachers and staff at Helen Keller Middle School strive to foster relationships with educators from other states. The Tri-State Consortium is an organization that aims to improve high-performing schools in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. It uses a "critical friends" model by gathering educators from all three states to assess a school's curriculum and offer suggestions for improvement. Many of the Helen Keller Middle School teachers and administrators have served on these Tri-State committees at various schools in the area.

Professional collaboration beyond the walls of a school offers the opportunity to discover new and exciting educational tools. The Helen Keller Middle School teachers are members of the Discovery Educator network that is blazing new trails in technology use in education. Members share resources and

ideas for incorporating technology in the classroom. In addition, Smartboard Technologies offer an online community where the teachers of Helen Keller Middle School share innovative Smartboard lessons with educators nationwide.

The teachers of Helen Keller Middle School treasure the professional collaboration and recognize the many rewards that come from colleagues working together to improve the educational experience for all learners.

1. Curriculum:

The curriculum at Helen Keller Middle School is dynamic and rigorous. Here is a snapshot of the main components in each curriculum area and grade level.

Social Studies starts students with Ancient Civilizations in grade 6, continues with World Geography and Cultures in grade 7, and narrows to US History in grade 8. This past year we also had a Geography Night program. We incorporate extensive essay work and critical analysis into our lessons in all grades.

Mathematics instruction in grade 6 introduces students to statistics and problem solving while focusing on rational numbers. Grade 7 students work on Problem-solving, introduction to algebraic thinking, ratio and proportions, and an introduction to geometry. The course in Formal Algebra is taught in grade 8.

Science classes cover Earth Science, Biology and Life Science, Physical Science in grades 6, 7, and 8, following the standard state mandated curriculum.

Integrated Language Arts:

Writing in grade 6 focuses on expository writing, creative writing and poetry, whereas both grade 7 and 8 students work on persuasive writing, literary analysis, creative writing and poetry.

Reading instruction encompasses a wide range of fiction, non-fiction, fantasy, short stories, biography and poetry. We attempt to tailor instruction to the level of the student, providing basic skills enforcement where necessary, and more in-depth critical analysis where appropriate.

Grammar is integrated into each grade level's curriculum.

Instructional Delivery Practices:

The delivery of instruction at Helen Keller Middle School is based on the drive to meet the needs of all learners. Projects and assessments take many forms so students have the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths and improve upon their weaknesses. Science labs, oral presentations, technology projects, original plays/ songs and journals are just a few examples. Teachers strive to thoroughly incorporate technology. We integrate current events to ensure relevance of learning. Professionals from our community enhance the curriculum by visiting classrooms and showing students how their learning applies to the real world. In addition, educators work collaboratively to create inter-disciplinary learning units. By making connections for students, learning becomes more meaningful.

The goal of education is to help students become productive and caring members of society. These character traits are integrated into instructional practices. Beyond the character education lessons taught in health classes, students work cooperatively in classes to complete tasks. This cooperation promotes team work and acceptance of diverse learning styles. Leadership skills are fostered through student-centered classroom models. Social integrity is highlighted through a focus on the human impact on our environment and student debate over current topics. Teachers nominate students for character awards, with a different character trait highlighted each month. The staff recognizes the importance of modeling respectful behavior, and they ensure that students have the opportunity to develop strength of character as they learn the curriculum. Instructional techniques that integrate character development and differentiated teaching methods help all students feel successful and respected.

Visual Arts Program

The Art Curriculum is designed in alignment with the National Standards for Art Education and with the Connecticut Arts Curriculum framework. It includes six Content Standards. Grade 6 classes expose students to art vocabulary, human figure drawing, and clay projects. Grade 7 students work on grid drawing, watercolors, pottery, string art, and critique an essay on Van Gogh. Grade 8 instruction includes large wood drawing, clay portraiture. Pop Art painting, and Picasso and Cubism.

Performing Arts Program

The Helen Keller Middle School music curriculum is driven by the National Standards for Music Education. Music is a large part of the educational equation at Helen Keller Middle School. Two thirds of students participate in the band or choral program. Students meet for instruction every other school day for a total of 91 days for instrumental or vocal instruction.

Physical Education classes expose students to various sports (Soccer, Ultimate Frisbee, Badminton, Team Hand Ball, Speed Ball, Floor Hockey, Volleyball, Basketball, Gymnastics, Track and Field, Tennis, Golf, Cooperative Games), include units on Fitness, and administer the Connecticut Physical Fitness Test.

Health Education in grade 6 teaches Nutrition, Personal and Consumer Health, Community and Environmental Health, and Injury Prevention. Classes in grade 7 learn about Personal and Consumer Health and Mental Health. Students learn about Community and Environmental Health, and Injury Prevention in grade 8. In addition, all grades learn about Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Human Growth and Development.

World Language Program:

Students take an Introductory Program in grade 6 for 60 days in either Spanish or French, moving to a full year course in Spanish or French for later grades.

In grade 7, grammar includes regular and irregular verbs and present tense. Vocabulary introduces students to words for weather, chores, relatives, home, places, events, food and travel.

Grade 8 grammar covers past tense, pronouns, adjectives, and commands.

Vocabulary expands to seasonal sports, daily routine, moods and body parts.

2. Reading/English:

The Grade 6-8 Integrated Language Arts curriculum is based on the Connecticut State Department of Education's Standards and includes, but is not limited to: reading and literary analysis skill building; constructed written response to text; formation and enhancement of reading strategies through non-fiction and fiction texts; composition of writing through the Writing Process; editing skills through punctuation, capitalization and mechanics; and revising skills to improve the structure and meaning of written responses. Each grade level follows the guidelines provided by the state and the district's core pacing guide and content based scope-and-sequence map. To reach reading goals and skills, each grade level teaches three to four core novels per year in addition to supplemental materials created by teachers. Teachers integrate writing instruction through models, direct instruction of genres, grammar instruction, and the Writing Process. Students receive timely feedback to improve their writing skills, and students practice writing consistently in their classes. Many resources are utilized to enhance the instructional process. Instructional technology at Helen Keller Middle School includes online databases, Educational Records Bureau's Writing Practice Program, blogs, website resources, and SMART(interactive) boards in every classroom.

To identify needs of students, a series of benchmark assessments are administered in the fall, winter, and spring. These assessments assist teachers and support staff to identify the instructional and individual needs within each class. Teachers meet in vertical teams and grade level teams to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the learners and identify students who may need additional support. Support classes taught by the English teachers and the reading/writing specialist. Using this data, teachers differentiate their instruction. Students create goals to improve their skills and teachers monitor students' progress of reading and writing fluency, reading comprehension, writing organization, and elaboration.

With the support of administration and staff, all students are encouraged to read and write through their content and non-content area classes, and time is provided each morning in a silent-sustained reading time. Professional development about reading and writing strategies has been provided to all staff in order to provide a common language and approach to reading and writing across the curriculum. Specifically,

Integrated Language Arts teachers guide and mentor content area teachers to improve students' reading and writing skills and to ensure fidelity of implementation. Additional support and instruction is provided to students through differentiated activities and support classes to help students who are struggling with the curricular content. Students practice reading and writing skills throughout all of their classes with a consistent approach of strategies from staff, which is mentored and guided by the Integrated Language Arts department, which has created a positive school climate of reading and writing.

3. Mathematics:

The mathematics curriculum of Helen Keller Middle School aims to provide instruction that is appropriate based on students' cognitive level and previous achievement. Students in sixth grade focus on building the foundation skills that will be necessary for success in Algebra 1 and beyond. This includes the continuing study of fractions, decimals and percents previously introduced at the elementary level, as well as developing students' proportional reasoning and their ability to recognize and work with patterns. Sixth grade mathematics is taught at two levels – Sixth grade mathematics, and Advanced sixth grade mathematics, the latter offering students who have demonstrated through their achievement in elementary school that they should be challenged by extending their thinking beyond the regular curriculum. In seventh grade, students are placed into one of two levels, either Seventh Grade Math or Pre-Algebra based upon a number of data points including Connecticut Mastery Test scores, grades in 6th grade, and their performance on district assessments. Students in seventh grade continue to work on the skills necessary for success in Algebra 1 with a strong emphasis on proportional thinking. They also begin to work with the concept of variables to both solve equations and model problem situations. In eighth grade, about three-quarters of the students take Algebra 1, and the other students take Pre-Algebra. Where appropriate students in Honors Algebra complete the standard Algebra 1 curriculum, but are also challenged to investigate topics that normally appear later in the mathematics sequence, most frequently topics that are normally studied in Algebra 2. Students in Pre-Algebra investigate the topics that will give them a solid foundation for high school math, including data analysis & probability, ratio & proportion, geometry & measurement and algebraic reasoning.

While very few of our students perform below grade level, we have taken steps to insure the success of those students. Based upon a number of indicators, including the previous year's Connecticut Mastery Test score, district assessments, and grades, some students are identified as needing support. These students receive small-group instruction in addition to their regularly scheduled math period. For many students, this support occurs every other day, although support can be given more or less frequently based upon the student's individual needs. We use the SRBI (RTI) model to offer support to students in the areas that have been identified as weaknesses and use progress monitoring to track their improvement over time.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

Project Lead the Way (PLTW) started as a new program in Helen Keller Middle School at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year for all 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. Combining the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects areas, PLTW classes focus on hands-on, project-based learning and are engaging for students and the teacher. PLTW activities are based in real-world experience and students are challenged with relevant, rigorous projects that develop students' innovative, collaborative, cooperative, and problem-solving skills.

The PLTW classroom is a thought-provoking environment, where students develop critical thinking skills, helping prepare them to take on real-world challenges. In the course, students have the opportunity to measure, create, design and build things such as furniture, towers, gliders, playgrounds, mechanical systems and automated robots, applying what they are learning in math and science to take on the challenges. The students in creating work with advanced 3D modeling software (professionals use this same program) and also building models at the workstations. Through an engaging, hands-on curriculum, PLTW encourages the development of problem-solving skills, critical thinking, creative and innovative reasoning and a love of learning.

PLTW prepares students to be the most innovative and productive leaders in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and to make meaningful, pioneering contributions to our world. STEM education is at the heart of today's high-tech, high-skill global economy and the PLTW program gives students a brighter future by providing them with a foundation and proven path to college and career success in STEM-related fields. Students also research some of the vast career options an engineer may work in thereby exposing them to the rewarding, challenging and well-paid profession America needs to help meet our future societal demands. The coursework directly ties with HKMS's mission of nurturing and inspiring "all students to realize their potential and to become self-sustaining, contributing members of a diverse, continuously changing society." Through the hands-on, project-based learning environment where students are working together in a partnership, the HKMS students are provided "a challenging, dynamic and enriching education that cultivates the unique talents of each student and fosters personal integrity, intellectual curiosity, individual wellbeing and civic responsibility."

5. Instructional Methods:

A wide variety of instructional techniques are utilized in the classrooms of Helen Keller Middle School. The educators recognize that different methods are needed to address the span of students' learning styles and needs. In addition, creative and innovative techniques improve student engagement. Graphic organizers have long served to enhance understanding but with the integration of technology, students are creating these visuals using Inspiration software and iPods. Visual aids bring learning to life. With the incorporation of images, videos and music files into lessons and Smartboard presentations, learning ignites all senses.

The main goal of education is to prepare students for their futures in the "real world". The teachers of Helen Keller Middle School recognize the importance of real world connections in all curriculum areas. For example, essential questions are used to guide debates in social studies classes about current events and important historical topics. The analytical nature of this type of activity challenges students to act as critical thinkers: synthesizing information and making inferences.

Each student is a each unique learners with a wide variety of strengths and styles. Recognizing Garner's work on multiple intelligences, teachers utilize student choice for assignments and projects. For example, when studying the ancient Greek culture, students have the option to create a song about the culture using the software on Mac computers, creating 3D models depicting ancient Greek life or writing and performing a play. The nature of the student choice model fosters collaboration and the demonstration of creativity. Final products are often impressive due to the high level of student buy-in.

Reading is a vital skill across all curriculum areas. The staff participated in a professional book club about teaching reading across the curriculum areas. Now all disciplines incorporate important reading strategies such as chunking the text, offering multiples levels of reading material as well as reading for meaning. Beyond these approaches used for learners, differentiation is applied in all classrooms to ensure that every student is successful. For example, writing assignments in eighth grade language arts are tiered to challenge all learners. An example assignment is writing a literary analysis paper answering the question, "Is Santiago from *The Old Man and the Sea* a code hero?" The enrichment assignment for advanced learners is modified to require learners to use both Santiago from *The Old Man and the Sea* and the main character from a Hemingway short story. For learners who need further accommodations, assistive technology plays an important role. The school provides Alpha Smarts, online administration of assessments and access to assistive auditory devices. Differentiation is utilized in all classrooms because the individual growth of learners is the main focus of Helen Keller Middle School educators.

6. Professional Development:

Under the principal's leadership, Professional Development at Helen Keller Middle School has focused on reading and writing throughout the curriculum for the past three years. This school wide emphasis on reading and writing is evident in our strong standardized test scores; in 2010 CMT testing 96.1% of students were proficient in reading and 96.9% in math. During 2009-2010, faculty meetings were

devoted to the book study of *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?* by Chris Tovani. Guided by the Integrated Language Arts Specialist, the faculty discussed each chapter and learned strategies to teach reading in their content areas.

Furthermore, teachers work in vertical teams five times a year to analyze student performance data, calibrate and score student assessments and plan for future lessons that integrate reading and writing. Teachers work diligently to align their work to the state standards in each content area, and are expected to reference specific content standards in lesson plans. At Child Study Team meetings, grade level meetings, and professional development days, we make instructional decisions for all students based on assessment data. For example, both formative and summative assessments throughout the year are used to identify which students need additional academic support; then, teachers in each subject areas develop lesson plans that target specific skills for each of the identified students. A visitor to any HKMS staff meeting would hear teachers express genuine concern if a student is not making sufficient progress, and would also hear other teachers offering suggestions for ways to help.

In addition to school based professional development, Helen Keller Middle School teachers collaborate with our sister school in Redding to align curricula and instructional strategies; because students from both middle schools attend the same high school, it is important for staff to work together on curriculum revisions and assessments. Integrated Language Arts teachers from both middle schools work alongside the high school teachers to score the high school Junior Writing Portfolios. This invaluable professional development opportunity allows our teachers to view our system as a K-12 system that each student passes through.

Last, but not least, our Tri-District is currently undertaking a curriculum alignment audit, and teachers will be asked to help review current written curriculum and work on re-writing curriculum that needs updating. This significant initiative involves the work of many staff including central office, building administration, and teachers. This work is expected to last years and will be a valuable professional development for any individual involved.

7. School Leadership:

From April 1, 2004 through October 2010, Helen Keller Middle School was led by Joan Parker, who passed away November 15, 2010. She was a charismatic school leader who held high expectations for herself and those around her. Mrs. Parker had a positive influence on the lives of students and staff members through her compassion and a personal approach to her position as principal-- she knew the names of all students and their family members.

Her style of leadership is best described by the following characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, persuasion, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community. Many leadership experts (such as Bolman, Deal, Covey, Fullan, Sergiovanni, and Heifitz) also reference these characteristics as essential components of effective leadership.

The Center for Servant Leadership at the Pastoral Institute in Georgia defines servant leadership as a lifelong journey that includes discovery of one's self, a desire to serve others, and a commitment to lead. Kent Keith, author of *The Case for Servant Leadership* identifies seven key practices of servant leaders: self-awareness, listening, changing the pyramid, developing your colleagues, coaching not controlling, unleashing the energy and intelligence of others, and foresight. The former principal continually strove to embody traits such as these. Joan Parker always put people first, was a skilled communicator and was a compassionate collaborator.

The former principal put students front and center of all decisions, and she was tireless in her efforts to marshal district resources, parent and community support, and staff commitment to ensure that Helen Keller Middle School became an exemplary middle school. For example, she led two important school improvement initiatives-1) the installation of Smartboards in every classroom and 2) the implementation of PLTW (Project Lead the Way - the innovative STEM program). The school district did not have the funds to support either of these projects, so the former principal developed a partnership with parents to

raise money; with her as their visionary, the Easton Learning Foundation collected \$115,000. Now Helen Keller Middle School has a Smartboard (interactive whiteboard) in every classroom, and PLTW (complete with 24 computers) was just implemented in the fall of 2010.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 6 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test

Edition/Publication Year: 4/2006 Publisher: Measurement Incorporated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient	99	99	98	97	97
Goal	93	95	89	86	83
Number of students tested	117	136	128	117	123
Percent of total students tested	96	97	100	100	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	6	4	0	0	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	4	3	0	0	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11CT2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 6 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test

Edition/Publication Year: 4/2006 Publisher: Measurement Incorporated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient	100	97	95	97	94
Goal	99	92	89	94	90
Number of students tested	116	133	128	117	123
Percent of total students tested	95	95	100	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	6	7	0	2	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	5	5	0	2	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11CT2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 7 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test

Edition/Publication Year: 4/2006 Publisher: Measurement Incorporated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient	100	99	96	98	97
Goal	96	89	86	89	86
Number of students tested	131	125	124	123	127
Percent of total students tested	96	98	100	99	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	5	2	0	1	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	4	2	0	1	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11CT2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 7 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test

Edition/Publication Year: 4/2006 Publisher: Measurement Incorporated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient	99	98	98	92	96
Goal	97	98	91	86	88
Number of students tested	131	126	124	123	127
Percent of total students tested	96	99	100	99	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	3	1	0	1	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	1	0	1	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11CT2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 8 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test

Edition/Publication Year: 4/2006 Publisher: Measurement Incorporated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient	100	98	98	94	97
Goal	94	89	92	84	86
Number of students tested	123	119	127	127	120
Percent of total students tested	97	99	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	1	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	1	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11CT2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 8 Test: Connecticut Mastery Test

Edition/Publication Year: 4/2006 Publisher: Measurement Incorporated

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient	98	98	100	92	96
Goal	95	92	90	87	88
Number of students tested	124	119	127	127	120
Percent of total students tested	98	99	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	3	1	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	1	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11CT2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 0

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient	100	98	97	96	97
Goal	94	91	89	86	85
Number of students tested	371	381	381	368	370
Percent of total students tested	93	96	100	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	15	7	0	1	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	7	4	0	1	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11CT2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 0

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient	99	98	97	93	95
Goal	97	94	90	89	89
Number of students tested	371	379	381	368	370
Percent of total students tested	93	95	100	98	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	12	9	0	3	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	7	5	0	2	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Proficient					
Goal					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

11CT2